



### The Role of Curriculum Review at the John A. Burns School of Medicine

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#### Introduction

The Liaison Committee on Medical Education, the accreditation body for all medical schools in the United States, specifically recognizes the important role of faculty in the design, implementation, and evaluation of a medical school's curriculum.

*"The program's faculty must be responsible for the detailed design and implementation of the components of the curriculum. The objectives, content, and pedagogy of each segment of the curriculum, as well as for the curriculum as a whole, must be subject to periodic review and revision by the faculty."*<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the Educational Philosophy of the John A. Burns School of Medicine states that curriculum evaluation "is a critical step in the ongoing monitoring, review, and improvement of the educational program."<sup>2</sup>

With these mandates, the Curriculum Committee implemented in December 2001 a faculty driven, peer-review system to evaluate periodically the quality of each course. The Curriculum Review Process includes monitoring student workload, the quality of teaching, and the consistency of each learning experience with the school's educational pedagogy.

#### The Curriculum Review Process at JABSOM

The curriculum review process at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine is based in its Office of Medical Education (OME). A Curriculum Committee provides guidelines through four key steps.

**Step 1.** Course directors gather information about their class, clerkship, or rotation, by completing a specific questionnaire focusing on the following areas:

- The curricular objectives, including how they are selected, and communicated to students, as well as how themes such as ethics, values, and cultural sensitivity are incorporated into the curriculum;
- The instructional methods: how information is taught to students, how patients are selected, how adequate student supervision in clinical settings is ensured, and how faculty and residents are prepared for their role as teachers;
- The student evaluation methods: how student knowledge and clinical skills are assessed, the consistency of this evaluation with

the objectives set forth at the start of the rotation, and how feedback about performance is communicated to students;

- The program evaluation: how the student feedback are collected about the course or clerkship and how the information is used to improve the educational experience;
- The consistency of the course with JABSOM's Educational Philosophy: questionnaire includes how the principles and practice of problem-based learning, the latest advances in medicine or timely social issues, and national standards and initiatives in medical education are incorporated into the course. The curriculum is aligned with the needs of the community and the generation of scholarly projects related to the course.

**Step 2.** Course reviewers, selected amongst the teaching faculty at JABSOM, examine the information collected by the questionnaire and meet with the course directors to gain a deeper understanding of the educational experience undergoing review. When deficiencies are noted, course directors and reviewers are encouraged to generate potential solutions and innovations that will improve the course. Collegiality and collaboration are fundamental principles in JABSOM's approach to curriculum review.

**Step 3.** Course reviewers present their findings to the JABSOM Curriculum Committee. Based on the information provided, the faculty and student members of the committee develop recommendations that are sent to each course director. Student members in the Curriculum Committee in particular, are encouraged to contribute to the final recommendations. They provide valuable insight into each educational experience. Additional discussion of these recommendations in educational subcommittees is encouraged.

**Step 4.** The course directors report to the Curriculum Committee their response to the recommendations. It is through this final step that the Curriculum Committee ensures appropriate revisions or improvements to occur following each comprehensive review. Each course at JABSOM is reviewed every three years.

#### Experience to Date

The majority of required courses and clerkships at JABSOM have been successfully reviewed through the four-step process. These reviews have led to numerous recommendations for course improvements such as increasing the frequency and quality of student

feedback, enhancing the skills of residents and faculty as teachers, revising the course or clerkship handbooks, improving PBL Health Care Problems, ensuring that course objectives are achievable during the length of the course, selecting the most important content for didactic sessions, increasing the observation of students performing history and physical examinations, and increasing educational research. Finally, course reviewers and directors have acknowledged that the process has made them keenly aware of educational innovations present in other learning venues. In addition, the process is not seen as overly time-consuming.

### Summary

The Curriculum Review Process plays a vital role in helping JABSOM achieve its mission to educate outstanding physicians for Hawaii. The Review Process is a component of a comprehensive plan to monitor and improve the quality of medical education. It complements the school's overall program evaluation plan that gathers survey information on the curriculum from students at various stages of their education from the first through fourth years, during their internship year, a survey of program directors during their internship year, an alumni survey, external measures such as the AAMC Graduation Questionnaire, and student performance on licensing examinations.<sup>3</sup> This review panel also serves as a forum for sharing educational innovations, encouraging educational research, and fostering collegiality and academic networking among course directors.

### References

1. Liaison Committee on Medical Education. Functions and Structure of a Medical School: Standards for Accreditation of Medical Education Programs Leading to the M.D. Degree. Liaison Committee on Medical Education. 2002.
2. JABSOM Educational Philosophy. Internal Document of the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine. 2003.
3. Kasuya RT, Arakaki L, Lindberg M, Sakai DH. The Role of Program Evaluation in the Medical Education at the John A. Burns School of Medicine. Hawaii Medical Journal 2003;62(11):254-255.

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